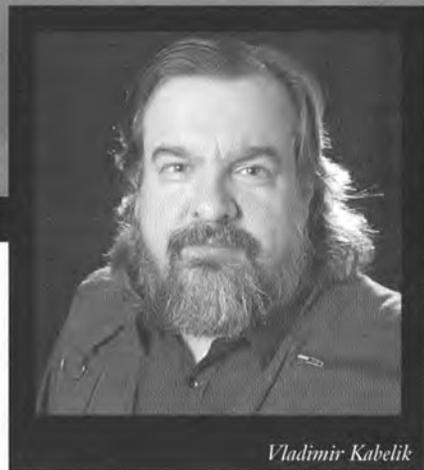


Sheridan College's Advanced Television and Film Program



Vladimir Kabelik

The great glass house on the Sheridan College campus looks rather fragile; as if it would shatter were someone to throw a stone. But inside all of that glass is the Sheridan Centre for Animation and Emerging Technology. Vladimir Kabelik, the coordinator of the Advanced Television and Film program, had a vision for the building that he and his fellow instructors shared with the architects before the foundation was laid. "One of the first things we said was that they could not create silence," says Kabelik. Atypical of most institutions, the design creates less of a boxed-in feeling and allows students from different programs to meet in the hallways and corridors.

Not only does the building give off the feeling of freedom; it looks like a nerve centre. And it is. It's the spine of Kabelik's baby, the post-graduate film program. Kabelik started at Sheridan, located just west of Toronto in Oakville, Ontario, almost 20 years ago, working in the Media Arts program. For him, the first five years were bliss, he says, because he enjoyed educating students and felt he was using the best teaching methods. But the next five years were an awakening. He realized there was room for improvement and he wanted the students to leave the school with more polished work in their portfolios. He made attempts to improve the Media Arts program but even with all the changes, the end result still wasn't as professional as he was hoping. "When you come from the industry, you love teaching students but you also want to see high-end production because it's more challenging," says Kabelik, who worked for Kratky Film in his native Czechoslovakia and later at the CBC, TVOntario and Vision TV after he moved to Canada. His need to bridge the gap between the industry standard and what students were capable of producing pushed him to start lobbying for an advanced film program. Fortunately, his timing was right. Teachers of other disciplines were interested in pursuing advanced programs in their fields, well-respected film industry professionals were willing to jump on board and the administration at Sheridan was receptive to the idea. Thus the Advanced Television and Film program was born.

"I know it's wrong to talk of machines and not people," says Kabelik as he walks into a room full of technology. Though it is evident that the students are more important to him than any camera or editing suite, the people are definitely outnumbered by the equipment. This year there are a total of 54 students enrolled in the program and there is so much equipment that both a production room and the green room for actors are being used for storage. Among the technology the program boasts are three AVID Symphony systems, Sonic Solutions DVD Authoring Technologies and the Quantel Authorized Training Centre, which has a High Definition Digital Image Compositing system. "In the past, some of the students would say: 'I cannot wait to leave this school because then I will be in the real world,'" says Kabelik. "Here they realize that in the real world they will not have what they have at Sheridan, which is a really unique situation."

There are three kinds of students who come into the advanced program: the graduates who have already studied film and want more in-depth training; the industry professionals who have been in the field and are looking to either update their skills or learn new ones; and, finally, the international students who have such a passion for filmmaking they have travelled to another country to pursue their dreams. One international student, Baoqi Ye, did just that and now, in the first year that Sheridan College has been eligible to nominate a film in the Academy Awards' Student Film category, *Left-Handed*, his 10-minute film in Mandarin with English subtitles about a young boy who is left-handed in predominantly right-handed 1979 China, has been submitted.

Having given birth to this program only two years ago, Kabelik is pleased with the advancements that have been made. But besides all of the flashy machinery and respect from the industry, it's very important to him that his students stay humble. "We really want to focus on story and craft in a very modest way," he says. "Quietly, without any kind of PR bullshit, the students learn the fundamentals of solid film and television making."

Lindsay Gibb is a freelance journalist and an assistant to the editor-in-chief of "Take One."